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Mariner Azhar heads north in bid to cross equator

LANGKAWI, Tues. - Malaysian mariner Datuk Azhar Mansor is heading north in a bid to cross the Equator as soon as possible where sea conditions are more stable.

This is to enable Azhar, on board the RM2 million Jalur Gemilang ocean racer, to reach home by next week.

Noel Belman, the shore base technical adviser, said Azhar was now about 150 nautical miles south of the Equator.

"With only 91 nautical miles covered over the last 24 hours, it would take another 1 1/2 days for him to cross the line."

Meanwhile, Azhar said he was making slow progress in the frequently changing weather conditions.

"Overcast skies with frequent showers bring about different wind conditions and my attention is thus focused on sail work," Azhar said in his e-mail to shore base at the Awana Porto Malai resort here.

A grand homecoming ceremony is being planned for Azhar when he reaches the finish line at the Star Cruise jetty, Tanjung Malai, here on Aug 10 with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expected to be on hand to welcome back the sailor.

He is now steering his way to Sabang in North Sumatra, Indonesia, which is about 980 nautical miles from his position today.

Azhar, bidding to become the first Malaysian to sail solo around the world, is now into the 182nd day of his voyage.

He has logged 24,153 nautical miles and has another 1,256 nautical miles to go.

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